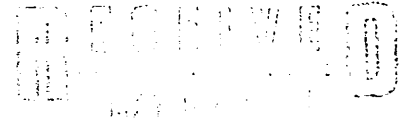


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name STRATTON MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT TOWER
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number N/A, Green Mountain National Forest not for publication
city, town Stratton vicinity
state Vermont code VT county Windham code 025 zip code N/A

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Guan L. Bois 4/29/92
Signature of certifying official Date
Forest Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 4/26/91
Signature of commenting or other official Date
Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

[Signature] 6/17/92
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Other: fire lookout tower

Domestic - camp

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/Culture - outdoor

recreation

Domestic - camp

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: fire lookout tower

Other: forestry camp

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls steel

log

roof metal

other weatherboard

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Conservation

Period of Significance

c. 1928-c. 1934

Significant Dates

c. 1928

c. 1934

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Civilian Conservation Corps

Stocker, Leon

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

(Entire text appears on continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Entire text appears on continuation sheet.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

GMNF Supervisor's Office,
Rutland, Vermont

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1

UTM References

A

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4	7	2	2	3	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hugh H. Henry

organization Historic Preservation Consultant date March 1990

street & number Green Mountain Turnpike telephone 802-875-3379

city or town Chester state Vermont zip code 05143-9418

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Occupying a small clearing atop the forested 3936-foot south summit of Stratton Mountain, the Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex includes the namesake forest-fire lookout tower and two adjacent one-story, gable-roofed cabins formerly used by the resident lookout watchmen. Erected c. 1934, the steel-skeleton tower of square plan carries a hip-roofed, one-room steel observation cab with a wood-planked floor reached by an interior multi-flight, steel-framed, wood-planked stair with landings. The small historic (1928) balloon-framed, one-room residential cabin possesses extraordinarily wide weatherboard siding; an added shed wing extends from its west gable facade. The larger modern (1970) two-room cabin contrasts by its milled-log construction and casement windows. The wreckage apparently of the original (1914) steel lookout tower lies amidst the trees east of the standing tower. The combined Appalachian and Long Trails, historic long-distance hiking trails, pass through the clearing. The complex retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex occupies the south summit of Stratton Mountain, a principal yet relatively isolated member of the Green Mountain range. The rounded south summit rises 3936 feet above sea level, the highest point in southern Vermont. A saddle descending to about 3830 feet separates the south summit from the somewhat lower north summit; the latter rises 3875 feet above sea level. On the west side of the mountain, a broad undulating plateau lies at an elevation of about 2500 feet; three large ponds - Branch, Bourn, and Stratton - occupy depressions in the plateau surface. The terrain around the other sides of the mountain descends into stream valleys interspersed with lower hills.

The south summit remains undeveloped apart from the lookout tower and the two adjacent cabins that were formerly used as living quarters by resident lookout watchmen during the April-October fire season. A small grassy clearing extends a short distance north and south of the east side of the lookout tower. The newer (1970) log cabin stands about 50 feet south of the tower, occupying nearly the entire width of the clearing. The older (c. 1928) cabin stands about 30 feet south farther south at the south edge of the clearing, oriented perpendicular to the log cabin. A dense spruce-fir forest surrounds the clearing. The severe climatic conditions and shallow soils limit the height of the trees to about twenty feet.

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Wreckage apparently of the original lookout tower (erected 1914) on the summit lies scattered on the ground among the trees a short distance east of the present tower. The wreckage consists of galvanized steel angle stock similar to that used in the standing tower. Several of the pieces are twisted or broken, indicating that they came either from the portion of the tower that was blown down during the winter of 1920-21 or from the remainder that was razed during the period 1936-38.

The north summit contrasts by being heavily developed with the aerial lifts and trails of the Stratton Mountain downhill ski area. A narrow dirt road passable only by four-wheel-drive vehicles follows the ridge between the summits. This road connects solely to a similar private ski-area road, and is now used mostly during the summer by pedestrians brought to the north summit by a gondola lift.

The long-distance Appalachian and Long Trails follow a joint route over the south summit, passing between the watchman's cabins and the lookout tower. The route follows a broadly semicircular course that traverses the west flank of the mountain. The northwest approach of the trail passes Stratton Pond on the plateau west of the mountain while the southwest approach crosses the Kelly Stand Road at the East Branch of the Deerfield River.

The use of the lookout tower for fire spotting ceased after the 1982 season. In 1986, the U. S. Forest Service acquired a large tract of land including the south summit for addition to the Green Mountain National Forest. Following this purchase, the combined Appalachian and Long Trails were restored to their original route over the summit. The lookout tower was repaired and painted in 1988 to serve for recreational viewing. The log cabin was reopened in 1989 to provide quarters for a resident caretaker-naturalist during the summer and fall hiking season.

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Lookout Tower; c. 1934

The tower possesses a square plan that tapers upward from being about 14 feet square at the base to 7 feet square at the cab level. The skeleton steel tower structure rises about 46 feet to the floor of the cab. The vertical walls of the enclosed cab rise 7.5 feet to the eaves of the shallow-pitched hip roof, whose peak reaches about 55 feet above the ground.

The four corner legs of the tower structure rest on small square concrete piers poured on the outcropping bedrock. Below the cab, the tower structure is fabricated of steel angle stock of various gauge and weight. The corner legs are built of the heaviest stock, the horizontal braces of medium weight, and the diagonal braces of the lightest weight stock. The connections are bolted together; small steel plates are added at major joints to receive the several members. The tower is articulated by five vertical panels that diminish in height toward the cab.

An open steel-and-wood stair ascends the interior of the tower. The stair comprises five diagonal flights corresponding in length to the vertical panels of the tower structure. The individual flights connect triangular wood-planked landings at the southeast and northwest corners of the tower. Each flight consists of latticed steel stringers, wood-plank treads, and hand rails of angle stock supported at intervals by vertical members.

The one-room observation cab of square plan is entered by a rectangular hinged trap door in the southwest corner of the wood-planked floor. The lower half of the walls consists of sheet steel bolted to vertical steel angle stock at the corners. The upper half of the walls is occupied by metal-framed sash mounted in pairs (two per wall). Each nine-light sash is hinged above the second tier of lights so that it swings outward from the bottom. The sheet-steel hip roof is punctuated at the peak by a cylindrical ventilator with a conical cap.

The fire-spotting equipment has been removed from the cab. The only piece of furniture now present is a metal chair that apparently was used in conjunction with the firefinder stand. That stand consisted of a metal-pipe frame and a circular top overlaid with a topographic map of the region surrounding Stratton Mountain; it was removed probably in 1988 when the cab floor was replaced. Mounted atop the table, an alidade rotated on a ring to provide a compass bearing in the direction

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of the fire or object being observed. The instrument is now stored at the Manchester (Vt.) District office of the U. S. Forest Service.

Old Watchman's Cabin; c. 1928

The diminutive older watchman's cabin was constructed probably in 1928 by Leon Stocker, the owner of a sawmill in nearby Wardsboro Center, Vermont, at a cost of \$150. The building consists of a one-story, gable-roofed main block framed with dimension lumber and a one-story, pole-framed, shed-roofed west wing that contains the entrance. The wing was added during the 1950s as a storage shed for tools and fuel wood. This cabin has not been occupied since the construction in 1970 of the adjacent log cabin.

The one-by-one-bay main block measures 12 by 10 feet. It is sheathed mostly with extraordinarily wide, 18-inch horizontal pine boards with shiplap joints, probably sawn at Leon Stocker's mill. The roof is covered with corrugated sheet aluminum that was applied c. 1955. The one-by-one-bay wing measures 6.5 feet square and is attached flush with the north eaves facade of the main block. The wing is sheathed with rolled asphalt applied over horizontal flush boards that are partly exposed on the south facade. The cabin lacks a chimney; a hole for a stove pipe punctuates the west gable of the main block.

The entrance occurs on the north facade of the wing, the vertical-boarded, hinged door being placed next to the joint with the main block. (The original entrance to the main block remains in place at the left corner of its mostly-concealed west facade.) The wing's west facade has a wire-screened opening that has been boarded over. Both the north and south eaves facades of the main block are lighted by single bays of two-light sash that are now covered with sheets of particle board for protection.

The east gable facade of the main block is mostly enclosed by an added shed-roofed shelter for storing fire wood. Projecting about four feet from the wall, the shelter is framed with galvanized steel angle stock like that laying in the woods east of the lookout tower. The shelter is partly enclosed by rough poles standing vertically; its roof is covered with corrugated sheet metal.

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The interior of the main block contains a single room open to the underside of the roof. It is mostly finished with horizontal matched boards above the plank floor. A double tier of bunk beds is built against the east wall. A small porcelain sink is mounted under the south window, flanked on the left side by a stack of built-in wood shelves. A metal table stands in the southwest corner. The west wing lacks interior finish; a stack of pole-framed wood shelves is built into its southeast corner.

Log Watchman's Cabin; 1970

The newer cabin was built to provide more spacious quarters for the resident watchman. The materials for this predominantly log cabin were pre-cut at the mill of Green Mountain Cabins in Chester, Vermont. The materials were delivered to the site by tracked vehicle from the base of the mountain's north summit. The cabin was erected during the months of July through September, 1970 by a crew under the direction of Junior A. Harwood, the contemporary Vermont Department of Forests and Parks supervisor in Fire District No. 4 of the state.

The one-story, gable-roofed cabin possesses a rectangular plan measuring 24 by 16 feet. The building rests on concrete piers placed at the corners and half-way along each side. Below the level of the horizontal eaves, the walls are built of logs that are sawn flat on the top and bottom. The logs are notched to project beyond each corner in both directions. The gables differ by being framed and sheathed with V-joint vertical boards of varying width. The log rafter tails are exposed at the eaves, and the soffits are also sheathed with V-joint boards. The shallow-pitched roof is covered with corrugated sheet metal. A cylindrical metal stove chimney rises from the east slope.

The three-bay main (west) eaves facade includes a central entrance fitted with a four-light-over-two-panel, hinged main door and a storm door made of V-joint vertical boards and hung on strap hinges. A concrete platform with steps provides access to the doorway. The flanking window openings are framed with dimension lumber and fitted with the six-light casement sash common to the cabin. The opposite (east) facade lacks an opening in the central bay. The north and south gable facades are lighted by central single bays of casement windows.

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The interior of the cabin is subdivided into two rooms of roughly two-thirds and one-third the overall space. A loft surmounts the larger main (south) room while the north room is open to the underside of the roof. The floor and the ceiling of the main room are finished with plywood in contrast to the log perimeter walls. The partition between the rooms is finished with plywood on one side and V-joint vertical boards on the other side. An off-center plywood door provides access to the north room. The main room now serves multiple uses, having wood kitchen cabinets along the east wall, a table and chairs next to the south wall, and a bed in the southwest corner. The smaller north room was apparently intended for a bedroom, having a closet built into its northwest corner, but is now used only for storage.

This cabin is considered noncontributing to the historic character of the Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex owing solely to its age of less than fifty years.

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The Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex holds significance for including a structure that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a specific and unusual type, a steel-skeleton tower with a lookout cab designed for spotting forest fires. The complex holds significance also for being associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history, specifically the development of outdoor recreation in the form of hiking trails and related facilities, the practice of government-sponsored forest management and control of forest fires, and the public works of the Civilian Conservation Corps performed during the 1930s. About thirty-five fire lookout towers existed on Vermont mountain summits by that decade; several, including Stratton's, were constructed by the C.C.C. Serving also for recreational viewing, the Stratton tower stands beside the original route shared by the Long and Appalachian Trails; started during the 1910s, the former was the first long-distance hiking trail in the United States. The complex is also significant for retaining its original c.1928 lookout watchmen's cabin.

Only about fifteen lookout towers now (1990) survive in Vermont, and none remains in its original usage as fixed lookout stations have been replaced by less costly and more flexible aerial surveillance. The Stratton lookout tower was among the last three used for fire spotting in the state until its closure in 1982. While most of the other extant towers have been altered or abandoned, the Stratton tower has been refurbished in its original design for recreational viewing. Together with the two adjacent lookout watchman's cabins, the tower continues to represent the practice of forest fire detection that prevailed in Vermont during the first half of the twentieth century.

The period of significance for the Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex begins c. 1928 with the construction of the earlier of the lookout watchman's cabins now extant on the south summit. The period continues until c. 1934 when the present lookout tower was erected. The second watchman's cabin was built in 1970; being less than fifty years of age, it is considered noncontributing to the historic character of the complex.

Stratton Mountain stands separate from other major members of the Main Range of the Green Mountains in southern Vermont. Furthermore, it is the highest mountain in the southern third of the state; its south summit rises 3936 feet in elevation. These characteristics give the mountain an obvious suitability for the location of a summit tower intended for any kind of long-distance

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viewing. The view overlooks much of southern Vermont and extends into New York on the west, Massachusetts on the south, and New Hampshire on the east.

The poor timber-harvesting practices prevalent in northern New England around the turn of the century led frequently to catastrophic forest fires. Thousands of acres of forest burned in Vermont during 1903, prompting the creation in 1904 of a network of town forest fire wardens. That was soon followed by the worst year of this century for forest fires in the state; almost 16,000 acres burned in 1908. More legislation in 1910 provided for fire patrols and State employment (at \$2.00 per day) of watchmen to serve at fire lookout stations created by private landowners.

The first fire lookout station was established on Camel's Hump in north-central Vermont in 1911. It consisted simply of a concrete table (plus a map of the surrounding region) placed on the bare rock of the summit; a telephone line extended from the valley to treeline. The first lookout tower, built of wood, was erected by a prominent landowner, Elmer A. Darling, the following year on Burke Mountain in northeastern Vermont. In southern Vermont, private landowners collected money in 1913 to establish a lookout station on Stratton Mountain. The original Stratton lookout tower was erected in the spring of 1914, and may have been the first steel tower of its type in Vermont.

In 1915, several private owners of extensive timberland, principally the forest products companies, formed the Vermont Timberland Owners' Association. The primary purpose of that group was the prevention of forest fires, and it raised money for the purpose by assessing members for payments relative to the acreage in their possession. In cooperation with the Vermont State Forester (and later the Vermont Forest Service), the association developed a fire detection network that included lookout towers, foot and motor patrols, and telephone communications.

Stratton Mountain also became the focus of outdoor recreational interest during this period. Among the most enthusiastic proponents was James P. Taylor, Associate Principal of Vermont Academy in Saxtons River, who formed a Mountain Club at that school and made many trips leading groups of students to various mountains in southern Vermont. Taylor became increasingly frustrated by the lack of hiking trails and shelters on those

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mountains. He has written that he was tent-bound "within view of misty Stratton" on a rainy July day in 1909 when he conceived the idea of a "long trail" extending along the spine of the Green Mountains the entire north-south length of Vermont. The following March (1910), Taylor and others met in Burlington to organize the Green Mountain Club for the purpose of building the trail. Local groups were also being formed to promote outdoor activities focused on specific mountains; the Stratton Mountain Club came into being in 1912.

Actual construction of the Long Trail commenced in 1911. The work was concentrated in the north-central part of the state during the first three years. By 1914, the Long Trail extended some 150 miles and the emphasis shifted to southern Vermont. The section over Stratton Mountain was opened in 1915, and the goal of extending the trail southward to the Massachusetts border was achieved two years later.

Meanwhile, the first steel lookout tower was erected atop the south summit of Stratton Mountain during the spring of 1914. The project was undertaken by the Stratton Mountain Club in cooperation with the Vermont State Forester. The spindly 65-foot tower of square plan was supported by four corner legs that converged at the top. A rectangular observation platform with a perimeter railing surrounded the apex of the legs, overhanging the upper end of the structure. A contemporary newspaper article states that the tower provided a "magnificent view, which is unexcelled in New England." That view encompasses the least developed and most heavily forested region of southern Vermont.

The dedication ceremony for the Stratton tower was held on June 26 (1914) even though the structure was not then complete, the work having been delayed by freezing weather and rain. More than 250 persons hiked to the summit to attend the event in "delightful" weather. The newspaper account notes that they "ranged in age from 13 months to 31 years, and a good proportion were women." Among the speakers was James P. Taylor, then living in Burlington and president of the Green Mountain Club. According to the same newspaper article, Taylor "offered congratulations to the Stratton Mountain club for its work in bringing about the tower, the cabin and the trail, thereby setting the pace for the rest of Vermont."

The cabin mentioned by Taylor stood "a short distance away" from the tower. It belonged to the Stratton Mountain Club and was

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open to hikers but it was used primarily as quarters for the resident lookout watchman. The 1920 edition of the Long Trail Guide refers presumably to the same cabin: "down the east slope about a half mile [are] a spring and Forester's Cabin, an old cabin now given over to hedgehogs, which may give shelter in an emergency." This suggests that there was not then a watchman in residence although the description mentions that "a phone of the State Forestry Service is installed near the tower."

The lightly-framed tower withstood the severe winter weather atop Stratton only about seven years. In his Trails and Summits of the Green Mountains published in 1926, Walter O'Kane writes that the tower "was originally much higher than it is now. It was not built strongly enough to withstand the wind velocities that it was exposed to, and it was partly wrecked by a storm that swept the mountain in the winter of 1920-21. Some of the twisted framework lies near the present structure. A section of it, however, came through the gale without serious harm and was used to make the present structure. It is not heavily built, but it is anchored to many trees and stumps...." A photograph probably of the tower in its original height shows reinforcing log poles reaching nearly half of that height.

The 1924 edition of the Long Trail Guide reveals a change in emphasis of usage and probably ownership of the rebuilt tower. "The State Forestry Department maintains the steel tower erected originally by the Stratton Mountain Club, and the watchman is housed in Porcupine Lodge about a quarter mile east of the summit, steeply down hill, where there is excellent water. This lodge is built of huge logs, is small, and has but one spare bunk beside that of the watchman." The description notes "a telephone installed at the tower that connects with a farmhouse in the valley on the east side."

The original conception of another major long-distance hiking trail apparently occurred also on Stratton Mountain. In 1900 when only twenty-one years old, Benton MacKaye, a noted forester and regional planning theorist, hiked a lengthy route over the Green Mountains from Haystack on the south to Mansfield on the north, thereby anticipating by a decade the idea of the Long Trail. Stratton Mountain was part of his route on that first trip, and while there on a later trip MacKaye conceived of a trail extending along the Appalachian Mountain chain between New Hampshire and Georgia. MacKaye's plan for the Appalachian Trail or "Appalachian Skyline" appeared first in an architectural

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journal published in 1921. The route coincides with the Long Trail through southern Vermont and over Stratton Mountain. The Vermont portion was opened by 1930 with the completion of a link between the Long Trail at Sherburne Pass and New Hampshire.

The first watchman's log cabin on the flank of Stratton Mountain was succeeded probably in 1928 by a new balloon-framed cabin sited on the summit about one hundred feet south of the tower. The Vermont Timberland Owners Association arranged to have Leon Stocker, the owner of a sawmill in nearby Wardsboro Center, build the modest cabin for \$150. In a letter dated June 19, 1928, Robert M. Ross, who was then the Vermont Commissioner of Forestry, approved the construction of the camp "of thoroughly dried, matched Pine boards with two windows, complete with sash, and a door with the necessary hardware. The roof should be so constructed as to withstand a large amount of snow and properly braced to take care of this feature. The roofing material should at least be good three ply roofing paper and a provision should be made for a stove pipe, six inch hole, with the necessary galvanized iron protection around hole. The floor should be double boarded...." The walls of this small cabin are sheathed with horizontal boards of extraordinary width, fully eighteen inches, that presumably were sawn in Stocker's mill. Like its predecessor, this cabin has a practical capacity of two persons with bunk beds installed against one wall.

The biennial reports of the Vermont Forest Service and successor Department of Forests and Parks provide general information about the structures atop Stratton Mountain and their maintenance. During the biennium 1930-32, "repairs" were made to the first Stratton lookout tower. The next biennium, 1932-34, brought the construction of several "new steel towers with stairs and glass enclosures," including the present tower on Stratton. Most of those towers were erected by the newly organized Civilian Conservation Corps.

Somewhat ironically, the national economic collapse of the 1930s was accompanied by unprecedented development of outdoor recreation facilities and forest management in Vermont. The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps by Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration in 1933 brought about innumerable improvements in Vermont's state parks and private forest lands. Perry H. Merrill, the state C.C.C. director, has written that those efforts "put Vermont's state recreational development ahead by 50 years." Indeed, Vermont benefited more from the program

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than most other states but responded by denying Roosevelt himself any electoral votes in his four presidential victories.

At least twenty-four camps were established and about 40.5 million dollars were expended in the state during the nine-year existence of the C.C.C. The corps undertook a variety of work, principally the construction of major flood-control dams, over 105 miles of roads and truck trails, hiking trails, many campground structures, and forest fire lookout towers on several mountains. The latter included seven new steel towers, three new wood towers, and eight new "lookout cabins" together with the necessary telephone lines to link the towers with the commercial telephone network.

The C.C.C. performed only a limited amount of work in the Stratton vicinity owing to the private ownership of most of the land. Their largest task was the construction probably in 1934 of a new steel lookout tower on Stratton Mountain. Both the 1932-34 and the 1934-36 biennial reports of the Vermont Forest Service state that a new steel fire tower was erected on Stratton. The repeated listing in 1934-36 indicates that the tower construction actually occurred during the summer of 1934, thereby spanning portions of both biennial periods. The 1935 edition of the Long Trail Guide confirms its completion, referring to the "Fire Warden's cabin and new steel tower [emphasis added], erected and maintained by the State Forestry Department." The previous edition of the guide, published in 1932 prior to the formation of the C.C.C., mentions simply a steel tower (the 1914 one). The 1934-36 biennial report also mentions the construction of a new telephone line between Stratton Mountain and West Wardsboro, presumably to connect to a commercial line.

The old and new Stratton towers apparently stood side by side for a few years. (Old and new towers matching the pair on Stratton are known to have stood concurrently on the summit of Gore Mountain in northern Vermont.) The removal of Stratton's 1914 tower occurred during 1936-38; the biennial report for that period states tersely: "Razed old tower. Improved camp - lined interior. Graded area around tower and camp."

Some pieces of the original tower are now lying partly buried among the trees a short distance east of the present tower. The galvanized steel angle stock is partly twisted or broken, indicating that it toppled to the ground. That, of course,

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happened in 1920-21 when a portion of the tower was blown down, and it probably occurred also during the final razing. A few pieces are stenciled with the words "Robert M. Ross, Deputy State Fire Warden, Jamaica, Vt." Ross held that position prior to his appointment in 1917 as Assistant State Forester; subsequently he served as Commissioner of Forestry during the period 1924-28. The stenciling was applied probably to serve as shipping address for the delivery of the tower components to Jamaica, then the nearest station on the now-abandoned West River Railroad.

Another highly significant event for forest ownership and management in Vermont occurred in 1933 when the U. S. Congress passed legislation to establish the Green Mountain National Forest. This act enabled the Federal government to begin the systematic purchase of land within the designated perimeter boundary of the forest in southern and central Vermont. Stratton Mountain stands well within the boundary but land on the mountain remained mostly in private ownership (principally the International Paper Co.) for a half-century after 1933.

A significant change in the original route of the Long Trail over Stratton Mountain occurred about 1940. The main route was then shifted westward off the mountain to follow the East Branch of the Deerfield River. The Stratton trail became known as the "alternate route." The main route was relocated westward again about 1970, and the intermediate Deerfield River route was abandoned. The International Paper Co. then owned most of the land involved in all three routes. The U. S. Forest Service ultimately purchased a narrow corridor for the 1970 route to protect the trail from further dislocation.

Minor improvements were made to the Stratton lookout facilities during the decade of the 1950s. The cabin was refurbished during 1951-52, being "modernized" on the interior with a new sink and more cupboards and shelves. A new woodshed and new toilet were also built. The 1953-54 period brought improvement to the lookout's telephone system; the mountain line was converted from one-wire to two-wire and dial service was introduced. During the period 1955-56, the cabin roof was covered with sheet aluminum over the previous tar paper. The 1957-58 biennial report states that "an addition was made to the cabin for storage space;" this presumably refers to the shed-roofed west wing although its actual addition may have been made some years earlier.

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During the late 1950s, Stratton Mountain began to lose its wilderness character. A new paved state highway from the village of Bondville penetrated to the eastern base of the mountain. A downhill ski area was constructed on that side of the mountain, with mechanical lifts reaching to the north summit. The number and pattern of lifts and trails on the mountain have expanded steadily in subsequent years. Concurrently, the land around the northeast side of the mountain has been intensively developed with commercial facilities, recreational houses, and hundreds of condominium units for seasonal or temporary occupancy, all linked by miles of new roads.

The second extant cabin on the south summit of the mountain was built in 1970 about halfway between the earlier cabin and the tower. Comprised mostly of milled logs, the new cabin was assembled from pre-cut materials produced by the firm of Green Mountain Cabins in Chester, Vermont. The materials were hauled by tracked vehicle from the base of the Stratton ski area to the mountain's north summit and then along the ridge to the south summit site. The cabin was erected during July-September by a crew under the direction of Junior A. Harwood, the contemporary supervisor of Vermont Fire District No. 4. This cabin was subsequently occupied for eight seasons by one couple, Hugh and Jeanne Joudry, who were the lookout watchmen at Stratton Mountain from 1968 until 1978.

The fire-spotting season at Stratton began during the latter half of April and continued until the beginning of November. Apart from occasional summer droughts, the period of highest forest fire risk in Vermont usually occurs during the early spring prior to the emergence of leaves; most fires are caused by human negligence in outdoor activities. A telephone line extended from the lookout tower southward down the mountain to the nearest roadside commercial telephone line, enabling the watchman to communicate directly with the fire wardens of towns in the region. The watchman also was equipped with a battery-powered radio for communication with the state forest fire dispatcher at the Killington Peak lookout tower near Rutland. Like other Vermont towers, the Stratton lookout cab was equipped with a firefinder mounted on a stand; this consisted of a circular topographic map covering a radius of 14 miles and an alidade that revolved on a central pivot to give compass bearings toward fire locations. The territory covered by the Stratton tower overlapped with the territories of the Mt. Olga tower in Wilmington to the south and the Okemo Mountain tower in Ludlow to

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the north. The precise locations of fires were determined by triangulation from two towers.

The reliance on fixed lookouts for spotting forest fires declined steadily in Vermont during the third quarter of this century. Aerial surveillance was introduced about 1950 and advanced steadily to become the dominant means. From a maximum of about thirty-five towers in 1930, only fifteen towers remained in operation by 1971, and that number was reduced to eight the next year. Stratton lookout ultimately became the third last active tower in Vermont until it also was closed after the 1982 fire season. The radio-dispatching towers at Killington Peak and Burke Mountain continued in service until the autumn of 1984. Their closure brought to conclusion the seventy-three-year epoch of mountain-top forest fire lookouts in Vermont.

Subsequently the Stratton lookout tower has been reopened for recreational viewing. Furthermore, changes of land ownership during the middle 1980s enabled a restoration of the Long Trail to its original route over Stratton Mountain. In March, 1986, The Nature Conservancy purchased from the International Paper Co. a 12,000-acre tract of land including the south summit and the south and west sides of the mountain. Two months later, the Conservancy transferred the tract to the U. S. Forest Service for addition to the Green Mountain National Forest.

After fire spotting ceased at Stratton, the tower and cabins received little maintenance and began to show the effects of weathering and vandalism. The Forest Service acquisition of the structures was followed in 1988 by a rehabilitation of the tower to improve its safety and appearance. The partly rotted wood components (stair treads and cab floor) were replaced in kind and the somewhat rusty steelwork was painted grey.

The project to relocate the combined Long and Appalachian Trails over Stratton Mountain was undertaken in 1987 by the Green Mountain Club and the Forest Service. The route follows the historic trail for much of the distance but diverges on the lower southwest flank of the mountain. There a new trail was built in 1988-89 along the hypotenuse of the triangular historic route in order to eliminate a stretch along a public road.

The restored route of the Long and Appalachian Trails over the mountain was officially dedicated at a ceremony on June 30, 1989. Like its 1914 counterpart, the event was held at the summit under

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"perfect weather conditions." The attendance numbered about 75, but most of those rode a ski lift to the north summit and then walked the three-quarters of a mile along the ridge. U. S. Senator Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont was the principal speaker; his efforts to secure a special appropriation of money enabled the Forest Service to acquire the Stratton land.

Complementing the recreational usage of the tower, the log cabin has been reopened for occupancy by a ranger-naturalist. The Green Mountain Club and the Forest Service have entered into a cooperative arrangement that provides for a resident ranger-naturalist during the hiking season between May and October. Rather than fire spotting, the position involves public education and protection of Stratton Mountain's various historic and natural resources.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower complex begins at Point A located at the northwest corner of Lot 8, Range 5 in Stratton township. Thence the boundary extends westward a distance of 100 feet along an extension of the north line of said lot to Point B at the northwest corner of the nominated property. Thence the boundary turns southward and follows a straight line perpendicular to the said extension of the north lot line a distance of 200 feet to Point C at the southwest corner of the nominated property. Thence the boundary turns eastward and follows a line parallel to the said north line a distance of 200 feet to Point D at the southeast corner of the nominated property. Thence the boundary turns northward and follows a straight line perpendicular to the south line a distance of 200 feet to Point E located at its intersection with the north line of Lot 8, Range 5. Thence the boundary turns westward and follows the said north lot line a distance of 100 feet to Point A, the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the lookout tower, the two watchman's cabins, and the small clearing surrounding the structures. Land ownership on Stratton Mountain has historically involved large tracts that included the south summit rather than a separate parcel specifically related to the lookout tower and cabins. Therefore the boundary of the nominated property refers to historic lot and range lines of Stratton township in order to define a compact area associated with the structures on the south summit.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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The following information repeats for all photographs:

Stratton Mountain Lookout Tower
Stratton, Vermont
Credit: Hugh H. Henry
Date: September 1989
Negative filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Photograph 1

Lookout tower and setting on south summit; view looking south
from north summit.

Photograph 2

Lookout tower - south facade; view looking north.

Photograph 3

Lookout tower - structural detail; view looking north.

Photograph 4

Lookout tower - cab interior and watchman's view of north summit
and other Green Mountains; view looking north.

Photograph 5

Overview from lookout tower of watchman's cabins and southeastern
Vermont landscape; view looking southeast.

Photograph 6

South summit clearing showing base of lookout tower and
watchman's cabins; view looking south.

Photograph 7

Log watchman's cabin - north and west facades; view looking
southeast.

Photograph 8

Log watchman's cabin - south facade; view looking north.

Photograph 9

Old watchman's cabin - north and west facades; view looking
southeast.

Photograph 10

Old watchman's cabin - west and south facades; view looking
northeast.

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PROPERTY OWNER

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